

Angry Words

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Last Sunday evening we examined the only way to have true joy and happiness – and that is by drawing close to God by always setting the Lord before us.
 - A. And we talked about the ways we can do this.
 1. We can draw closer to God by simply looking at His handiwork in creation, by spending time immersed in the Bible, through prayer, and by fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 2. And in that lesson, we also looked at the words of a song that taught some of these same principles – the song, "Walking Alone At Eve" written by William Slater, a gospel preacher who had written many songs before he passed in 1959.
 - B. Many of the songs we sing are designed to teach and admonish us – according to Colossians 3:16 – including a song that expresses much of what I want to speak about tonight.
 1. The song goes by two different titles – depending on which songbook you use.
 - a. One title is "Angry Words, O Let Them Never."
 - b. And the other is "Love One Another."

2. Interestingly enough, brother William Slater also had a hand in arranging the music to this song.
- C. So, this evening let's take a few moments to reflect on how important it is for us to think about the words we speak.
1. Words are so incredibly powerful.
 - a. We can speak words that can strengthen and edify one another, and deepen relationships.
 - b. Or, they can be words spoken rashly and in anger that will most certainly destroy peace and unity among brethren.
 2. Knowing this, it's important that we consider some of the godly counsel found in the Word of God, and in this song, when it comes to the way we speak to one another.
 3. And this godly counsel focuses on one critically important need – and that is the need to control our tongue.

BODY:

- I. The tongue is often described as the most powerful muscle in the human body.
 - A. Not because it possesses such incredible strength, but because it has the power to bless as well as the power to curse.

1. This is why James, the Lord's brother, urged Christians in the first century – just as he urges us today – to do all we can to control the tongue.
2. But that's not as easy as it may seem:
 - a. **James 3:3-10** – *Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.*

- B. Just look at the incredible power of the tongue.
1. Even though it's not all that big, it has the power to defile the whole person – to make us spiritually unclean in the eyes of God.
 2. And what's worse, it can be controlled but it can never be tamed.
 - a. We can keep it on a leash – so to speak – but we can never let down our guard for a moment.
 - b. Because the moment we do, we're going to say something we will later regret.
 3. Perhaps this is why James calls the tongue *"an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"* (**James 3:8**).
- C. Jesus also had some things to say about the tongue.
1. In condemning the hypocrisy of the Pharisees – who said one thing and did another – Jesus said:
 - a. **Matthew 12:34-37** – *"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

2. The thing that is most revealing about the tongue is that it reflects the real spiritual condition of our heart.
 - a. That's why Jesus said: *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."* (**Matthew 12:35**).
 - b. Our speech reveals the real us. We may try to conceal who we really are inside, but sooner or later our tongue will reveal the real truth about who we are.
- D. But if we work on the condition of our heart, our speech will follow and our words will benefit those who hear them.
 1. Solomon says: **Proverbs 15:1-2** – *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*
 2. And then he adds this: **Proverbs 15:4** – *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*
- E. As the song "Love One Another" reminds us:
 1. *"Angry words! O let them never
from the tongue unbridled slip;
May the heart's best impulse ever
check them ere they soil the lip."*

2. There are several reasons why it's so important for us to take these words to heart. Solomon wrote:
 - a. **Proverbs 10:19** – *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.*
 - b. **Proverbs 17:27** – *He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.*
3. *"Angry words are lightly spoken, bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred, brightest links of life are broken, by a single angry word."*

II. So how should we use our words?

- A. Obviously, we want to speak to others in such a way that will do good.
 1. But to do that, we must do as Solomon advises:
 - a. **Proverbs 21:23** – *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*
 2. If we follow Solomon's advice, then our words will be uplifting and a thing of beauty.
 - a. **Proverbs 16:24** – *Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.*
 - b. **Proverbs 25:11-12** – *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. 12 Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.*

- B. By the way, did you the person whom James said needs to guard their speech more than any other?
1. **James 3:1-2** – *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*
 2. While James' admonition fits everyone, it's especially important for teachers to guard our tongues.
 - a. We're the ones who constantly use words to teach and admonish, and sometimes rebuke.
 - b. And as James says, there's not one of us who hasn't stumbled in word at one time or another.
 - c. I don't think James is speaking about making sure we teach the truth of God's Word as much as he is speaking about our need to teach in a way that will truly benefit those who need to hear it most.
 - d. In other words, teachers and preachers are not only going to be judged by what we say, but also by how we say it.
 3. Unfortunately, none of us have quite mastered that yet – including me.

- a. I know I've unintentionally said things, or worded things in such a poor way, that it angered some – and for that I'm always profoundly sorry.
 - b. I never apologize for teaching or preaching the truth, but I can assure you I've had to apologize for an ill choice of words.
4. But that's true of all of us.
- C. I think this is why the song includes these words of advice:
1. *"Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, for a moment's reckless folly thus to desolate and mar."*

III. So what can we do to insure we never damage those friendships?

- A. Perhaps the best place to start us by understanding the real blessings that come from such deep friendships.
1. The Bible is filled with so many wonderful passages that speak about the beauty of having those special friends whom we love, and who love us in return.
 - a. Look at the love of Ruth for her mother-in-law, Naomi: **Ruth 1:16-17** – *But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will*

die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

- b. Consider also the depth and purity of Jonathan's love for David: **1 Samuel 18:1** – . . .*the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*
 - c. Or look at Paul's love for his dear coworker in the faith, Timothy: **2 Timothy 1:1-4** – *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy. . .*
2. Solomon also has a lot to say about the value of true friends.
- a. **Proverbs 17:17** – *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*
 - b. **Proverbs 18:24** – *A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*
 - c. **Proverbs 27:6** – *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

- d. **Proverbs 27:9** – *Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.*
- e. And finally: **Proverbs 27:10** – *Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend. . . Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.*

3. Now perhaps we can truly appreciate the words of the song which say:

- a. *"Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, for a moment's reckless folly thus to desolate and mar."*

B. But perhaps the best way to avoid damaging friendships is to understand that our Savior teaches us to truly "Love One Another."

1. Just look at some of the things Jesus said about this.

- a. **John 13:34-35** – *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
- b. **John 15:12** – *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."*
- c. **John 15:17** – *"These things I command you, that you love one another."*

2. Now, perhaps we can understand why the chorus of this song repeatedly tells us:
 - a. *"Love one another', thus says the Savior;
Children, obey His blest command."*
- C. There is perhaps no better passage of scripture in the entire Bible that defines the true character of genuine love than the words of the apostle Paul to the very troubled and divided church in Corinth.
 1. These brethren were so much at odds with one another that they were actually taking one another to court. And they used the spiritual gifts they had been given in a prideful and arrogant way.
 2. And so, Paul paused right in the middle of his discussion of spiritual gifts to speak of love.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** – *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

3. However, to help these Corinthians – and us – to understand what true, pure, sacrificial love really is, Paul offers this definition in 1 Corinthians 13:
 - a. Love suffers long (patient)
 - b. Love is kind (gentle)
 - c. Love does not envy (not jealous of others' good fortune)
 - d. Love does not parade itself (does not brag about itself)
 - e. Love is not puffed up (not arrogant)
 - f. Love does not behave rudely (not inconsiderate of others' feelings)
 - g. Love does not seek its own (it doesn't say you must love me before I can love you)
 - h. Love is not provoked (not sensitive) – the word "easily" (KJV) is not in any of the early manuscripts.
 - i. Love thinks no evil (assumes the best intention)
 - j. Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but in truth (concerned more about truth than winning)
 - k. Love bears all things (puts up with snide remarks, slights)
 - l. Love believes all things (gives others the benefit of the doubt)
 - m. Love hopes all things (looks for the best in others)

- n. Love endures all things (including hurt feelings by unkind or thoughtless words)
 - o. Love never fails (to show patience, compassion, forgiveness)
4. "'Love one another', thus says the Savior;
Children, obey His blest command."

IV. Friendships are too holy to let thoughtless words destroy them – especially relationships between with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A. But let me end by addressing the other side of this equation – namely our reaction to thoughtless words spoken to us.

1. If you recall, James said: **James 3:2** – *For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*
 - a. Some think James is stating a fact that it is possible to "*not stumble in word*" and to be "*a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*"
 - b. Others think James is speaking a little "tongue-in-cheek" here, by essentially saying "*if you can tame the untamable tongue then you must be 'a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.'*"

2. Regardless of whether or not James is saying it really is possible to tame the untamable tongue, the truth of the matter is we are seldom successful.
 - a. We all have a problem speaking and expressing opinions when it would have been better for us to have remained silent.
 - b. I've always loved the saying, "It's better to remain silent and thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."
 - c.. Just think of all the times you've said something you wish you hadn't said?
 - d. So, we all have a problem here.
 3. But not every hurtful thing we may say was meant to be hurtful.
 - a. Sometimes we simply chose the wrong words.
 - b. And sometimes we simply fail to express ourselves in the proper manor – in the proper spirit.
- B. However, on the flip side of this issue, not everything we take as hurtful was meant that way by the person speaking.
1. Sometimes we simply take things the wrong way.
 - a. Our minds don't consciously process every word that enters our ears.

- b. So, it's easy to misunderstand what was said, as well as misjudge the manner in which it was said.
 - c. When that happens, our first reaction is anger – when, in fact, it should not be.
- B. If we intend to be godly – meaning one who seeks to develop the same character as God – then we need to be "slow to anger."
- 1. When the people of Israel in the days of Nehemiah were confessing their sins, they acknowledge these wonderful attributes of God.
 - a. **Nehemiah 9:17** – *"But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness..."*
 - b. Now, there's a model for us to follow.
 - c. Furthermore, these were the attributes of God at the time when the children of Israel were building alters to idols and deliberately forsaking the Law of Moses.
 - d. Even then, God was still, *" . . .ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness. . ."*
 - 2. And consider the inspired counsel of Solomon.
 - a. **Proverbs 15:18** – *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute. (NASV)*

rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

2. Besides, there is a simple guideline to follow when we feel someone said something that has hurt us. We go to them.
 - a. **Matthew 18:15** – *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."*
 - b. This is how the Lord intended for His disciples to solve these kinds of problems – namely, to speak to one another and come to an understanding.
3. If we don't go to them and resolve this conflict, then the end result will be the very things we need to put out of our lives as brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - a. We will harbor anger, bitterness and resentment.
 - b. And as a result, we will lose our own soul.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Friendship truly is too holy to let words destroy it.
 - A. The one identifying mark that should set us apart from everyone else in the world is our love for one another.

1. **John 13:35** – *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
- B. I hope we give serious thought to the words of the song "Angry Words" or "Love One Another."
1. We should never let thoughtless words from our mouths unbridled slip.
 2. Nor should we let thoughtless words spoken to us – whether intentional or unintentional – provoke us to anger, bitterness and resentment.
 3. This is how true disciples of Christ should act toward one another.
- C. Are you a true disciple of Christ?
1. If you're not His disciple, and you want to be, then simply come to Him in faith and obedience this evening, and be baptized for the remission of your sins. That's all it takes.
 2. But if you are a disciple of Christ, and yet you realize you need help in the area of speaking thoughtless words, or of becoming easily offended because you are quick to anger and quick to wrath, then simply confess that to the Lord, and let us pray for you and for ourselves that we rid this sin from our lives.